

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

April 17, 2013

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Meeting Date: April 17, 2013

Called to Order: 6:00 PM

Location: 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

Finance Committee Members Present: Michael Naughton, Lynn Reynolds, Greg Garrison and Sharon Kennaugh. John Hanold was absent.

Board of Selectmen Members: Pat Allen and Mark Fairbrother. Christopher Boutwell was absent.

Others Present:

Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen

The recent town bylaw change to the makeup of the Finance Committee is effective tonight, so a simple majority of the current 5 members is a quorum.

Minutes

Mr. Fairbrother asked that two amendments be on page 3, in the second sentence of the first bullet for the Conservation Commission request. The first was that the word “put” be replaced with “purchase” and the second was to insert “open space” in front of the word “land”. That sentence will now read:

Mr. Fairbrother explained that this fund is usually used for the local match to state funds to purchase preservation restrictions on open space land, mostly farm lands.

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of April 3, 2013 as amended above.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Legal Issues

Mr. Naughton followed up with the Board of Selectmen regarding a previous discussion of ongoing legal issues.

- Specifically Mr. Naughton would like more information on the items shown in the list of legal expenses that Mr. Abbondanzio provided earlier.
- Mr. Naughton feels that part of the job of the Finance Committee is to ask unpopular questions and that it's a valid question to ask why the town is pursuing specific issues, and whether that is the best use of town funds.
- Mr. Fairbrother said we can talk to Mr. Abbondanzio, but the selectmen will not discuss strategies or specifics.
- Mr. Garrison said it was reasonable to ask for expected costs and timelines for specific issues.
- Mr. Naughton noted that the finance committee is asked to support appropriations, and some information is necessary to know whether the level of support is appropriate.
- Ms. Allen would like Mr. Abbondanzio to review issues and see what can be discussed with the Finance Committee.

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- Ms. Olsen will let Mr. Abbondanzio know of the request for information.

Board of Selectmen Meeting Adjourned at 6:13 PM

Selectmen Moved:

To adjourn.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting

The latest draft version was distributed for final comments and edits.

Ms. Kennaugh suggested that the conclusion include an acknowledgement that the budget issues have been helped by town employee's willingness to forgo cost of living adjustments for five years. There was brainstorming to determine how best to include this information in the report. After several revisions, it was suggested to replace the first paragraph in the **Conclusion** section on page 7 with:

There has been continuing pressure to maintain town services with the funds we have available. Our ability to do so in recent years has been significantly helped by the Gill-Montague Regional School District compact, efficiencies at the Water Pollution Control Facility, moderation of employee benefit increases, and employees' willingness to forgo cost of living increases.

Finance Committee Moved:

To accept the Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting as amended above.

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Topics not Anticipated

The House Ways and Means budget proposal for local aid has been released, and which would provide about \$28,000 in additional Unrestricted General Government Aid.

Finance Committee Adjourned at 6:43 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits –

- Minutes of April 3, 2013
- Current draft version of Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting
- Fiscal Year 2014 State Aid Estimates based on the House Ways and Means Committee's budget proposal

Next Meeting

May 1, 2013 Discuss any last minute information available regarding Town Meeting and review legal issues